# THE MORAL BASIS OF ITALY'S WAR

BY

GIORGIO DEL VECCHIO,

Professor of the University of Bologna.

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It is not enough for us Italians to know that our war is technically a legal or a blameless one, in strict accordance with those diplomatic agreements which should long ago have made it appear inevitable to the very people who to-day are protesting their astonishment at its outbreak. It is quite certain that our ingrained respect for law, which many centuries of civilisation have ripened, would not have permitted us to exhibit that contempt for all legal forms, that forgetfulness of the most solemn international conventions, of which other nations have been so guilty. And it is, precisely, a proof of the fineness of our nation's perception of what is lawful, that it was with an alert and feverish anxiety that Italians, not only those of the highest culture, but the simplest and even the uninstructed, awaited enlightenment concerning the true significance of the mysterious treaty of the Triple Alliance, fearing lest it should prove to be a bond from which we were not yet free and from which it must be impossible for us to free ourselves without injury to our honour. What a profound satisfaction filled our hearts when we learned with certainty that we had failed in nothing which our duty required of us, and

that the path of our future lay honestly open to us! Was it not evident that the compact to which we had remained and should have remained faithful had been broken by the other party to it and thus rendered null and void? We were in this way saved from a fearful dilemma. We were saved because our diplomacy, in spite of its past mistakes, had not, during the settlement of the clauses of the Treaty, been so short-sighted as to forget to provide for our equality as Allies, and for the essential reservations which proceeded logically therefrom. If our former allies, acting at their own discretion, came to regard us as their vassals, they have only themselves to blame for such blindness, and they alone must bear the consequences. As for us, we are innocent of this error, to which indeed we came near to falling the victims.

But it is not enough for us that we have been careful to observe the letter of the law. Nor can we be content with the prospect of those benefits, the growth of our power and prosperity, which we may hope for from the war. Such calculations cannot satisfy our conscience, as much because of the immeasurable value of the lives which must be sacrificed before these advantages shall be obtained, as because the gains of such an undertaking, however great they may be, cannot endow it with a sacred character. Our conception of life is far removed from that of primitive peoples, which holds the lust for rapine and conquest honourable in itself and worthy of admiration above all other qualities; from the

view, for instance, of the Germans, concerning whom Tacitus said :—*Materia munificentiae per bella et raptus. Nec arare terram aut exspectare annum tam facile persuaseris, quam vocare hostem et vulnera mereri. Pigrum quin immo et iners videtur sudore adquirere quod possis sanguine parare.** Violence, even when it is victorious, has, for us, in itself, nothing admirable, and it is only in the cause which it supports that it can find its justification. War does not become excusable by the mere fact that one has the strength to undertake it, or that favourable circumstances, or the number of one's allies, permit one to reap great benefit from it. War can be justified to our conscience only in so far as it aims at the vindication of a right which could be vindicated by no other means, or is found to be the unavoidable, because the only, method of re-establishing a moral truth, which some other strong power has failed to grasp ; if, in a word, it becomes a moral duty.

Such is exactly the case in our present war.

He whose soul is still strangled in the coils of an individualistic egoism, he who is the slave of illusions born of the individuality which studies only its own person, imagines himself to be happy and safe so long as this last is not materially injured. If existence be reduced to an expression purely material, it seems that no principle of a transcendental or universal character can affect it, and the individual will be led to consider other individuals as perfect strangers to

* Tacitus *Germania*, chap. xiv.

himself. But in the conscience a process inevitably takes place by which the individual, looking more closely into himself, discerns that he is possessed of a nature which rises above all egoisms, his own included, a nature that is racial or rather universal, endowing him with the power of recognising and indeed compelling him to recognise in others his equals. And then, to seek his safety within the narrow limits of his own short-lived and paltry *ego* appears to him to be a folly ; his soul perceives the necessity of obeying conceptions of a wider scope, conceptions which embrace practically a whole world. No more for us henceforth that primitive and niggardly antithesis between individual and individual ; no more for us the possibility of witnessing, without protest, wrong which is committed at the expense of another ; but rather, now, the close participation, upon the basis of our very being, in the life of all, for us now the exclusively human sense of equity ; so that, in the words of a sublime phrase, "No man's soul shall be at peace while a single man on earth is the victim of injustice."

In our path towards this supreme condition of theoretical and practical truth it is necessary above all else for us to escape from the bonds of our own individuality, discovering ourselves at the same time in those who, sprung from the same soil, stamped with the imprint of the same history, give us, in a common tongue, the sure proof of a past community of sentiment and thought, and thus a basis for its perpetuation to infinity. The nation is just the living, concrete expression of our individuality which

in it sees itself enlarged and multiplied endlessly both in the past and in the future. Every man should feel himself to be a part of a nation, because his conscience sets before him aims which his individual life may not attain; because his activities are limited by a civilised tradition in which he cannot help but be incorporated; because human liberty can neither live nor clothe itself in concrete form without the link of an intense and active spiritual fellowship. If the link of nationality becomes weakened, ignored or broken, the strength of the individual himself is diminished. If the nation be enslaved, the individual also finds himself in bonds. The defence, or the recovery, of national integrity is then, for each and for all, a right and a duty which is both absolute and incapable of limitation.

Every attempt, wherever made, to blot out or destroy the characteristic qualities of our nation, is an offence which does not the less touch us in the most sacred depths of our being because it is committed against people who are unknown to us and who live at a distance. The rights which are thus violated are our own; the duty of rising in their defence is so imperative upon our conscience, that, in so much as this vindication is not accomplished, our souls must be the prey of a bitter and cruel remorse.

It is this bitterness which, unfortunately, we have too long tasted in the presence of the oppression suffered by those Italians who live in the Austrian Empire. And this oppression, it is to be observed, far from being transitory and occasional, far from being

the result of the mistakes or crimes of individual persons or representatives of the Government, which would have made it capable of reparation, has been the direct consequence of the methods pursued by the rulers of the Dual Monarchy. Austria-Hungary, indeed, from the very fact of the incurable heterogeneity of the peoples who are her subjects, is able to exist only through their quarrels. Hence this strange State policy, this cold and cruel scheme of government which, not satisfied with keeping alive the antagonisms which already exist between races who are forced to live together, does everything in its power to aggravate them and even, by dealing out, on the one hand new privileges and, on the other, oppressions and persecutions, seems to busy itself with the discovery of new agencies of disunion.

This method of government which, were it not a gross outrage against the commonest principles of civic justice, would have seemed only a contemptible farce, has never discovered a more piteous victim than the Italian nationality, since it has sought, of deliberate intention, not merely to benefit other races at the cost of this people's enslavement and humiliation but, further, finally to annihilate that splendid section of our race which has remained a prey to the power of the Hapsburg dynasty. A series of acts, which we have already many times proved to the hilt and denounced, leaves no room for any doubt of the reality of this plan, which up to now nothing has been able to frustrate but the heroic and desperate valour of our

race, which, as it has known how to suffer and resist gloriously, will to-day, aided by us, its already liberated brothers, know how, gloriously, to triumph.

When, therefore, we furnish this aid, which henceforth it is impossible for us to withhold, we are accomplishing a sacred duty. We are moved neither by greed for the land of others, nor by any crooked whim for dominance; we desire for our brothers, life and liberty, which are our own life and our own liberty, reflected in the concrete image of the nation. We desire that it shall no longer be a crime for Italians to own that Italy is their country and to glory in the admission.

The State policy of Austria has imagined itself capable of moulding at its will not only the souls of nations but the very character of the soil. That Italy has for its boundaries the Alps and the sea is a truth almost of Nature, consecrated by a thousand years of unbroken historical tradition. Even in the days when Italy groaned most heavily under the domination of the foreigner, the passage of the Alps always signified, for her conquerors themselves, the invasion of Italy. This glorious name was for them alas! at least a glorious inspiration. Yet, in our day, to call by the name of Italy the high valleys of our rivers is treated as a crime in the Austrian Empire, which is thus forced by the unsoundness of its own foundation to persist in exhibiting itself as the very negative of Nature. What, indeed, is that " political

bond of the Empire," which is so jealously safeguarded by its penal statutes ? What is it but the dispersal of that which Nature has desired to bring together ?

" Italy ends at Ala," said the Public Prosecutor at Trent, during a certain shameful trial. And what do we say ? We reply by recalling the words of Petrarch and Dante and the supreme definition of Augustus; we reply by pointing to that sentence which Nature has written in ineffaccable letters upon the summits of the Alps.

" The position of the mountains, sea and rivers which serve as boundaries to the nations seems to have decided the number and the size of these nations, and we may say that the politieal distribution of this part of the world is in some respects the work of Nature." * All the events of modern history have confirmed the profound truth of this maxim of Rousseau, since they have shown the inevitably uncertain nature of States which are arbitrarily constituted in aecordance with the advantage of dynasties and upon other principles equally foreign to and contemptuous of the law of Nature. Armed force, the arts of diplomacy, however much they may be employed, can never sueceed in produeing harmony among discordant political groups, nor in preventing the elements of nationality, severed from one another and stifled through long years though they be, from developing in spite of all and forming themselves into a new

* Rousseau. *Extrait du projet de paix perpetuelle, etc.* (*Œuvres, Ed. Lefèvre, vol.* iv, p. 262).

unity. "What success," we ask with Romagnosi, "has rewarded the attempts of France, Spain and Germany in turn to add such and such a part of Italy to their dominions? Has time ever destroyed a natural distaste for the rule of the foreigner or truly achieved the incorporation of a part of one nation into the body of another? Never. How then shall we not hearken to the cry of Nature and own her unwearying strength, who forbids the union of heterogeneous elements and favours, on the contrary, the consolidation of homogenous associations. I defy all the perverse ingenuity of the servants of the Robbers of Territory, who have rewarded with every kind of honour, to stifle that cry or suppress the proofs of that strength." *

That is indeed a law of a universal character which assigns to each nation a "physical constitution" corresponding to its "moral constitution." And nothing but the combination of these elements ("uniform possession of the whole national territory included within its national boundaries" and "an adequate government ruling the whole nation") may produce that national political constitution, called by Romagnosi "ethniarchy," upon which, in short, depends the maintenance of a condition of general stability among the nations. "The ultimate goal which Nature appears to have indicated to mankind," the same philosopher explains, "is the just proportionment of States to the territories whose limits have been

* Romagnosi. *La Scienza delle Constituzioni.* 1st part. *Teoria speciale,* ch iii. §. 22.

visibly marked out by her hand and unmistakably shown by the unity of language and character and by preferences both common and constant. There are moral and political, as there are material and physical, affinities. Nature tends of herself to unite the homogeneous and to separate the heterogeneous.* Thus are the nations brought, by a force that is slow, not to be disobeyed, and progressive, to obtain their "natural constitution."

In conformity with this principle, Italy must be again made whole, that is to say, reconstituted as a unity within her natural boundaries; she must become a political unity as she is a moral and physical one. "Geographical conditions, tradition, language, literature, the political requirements of national power and defence, the desires of the population, the inborn democratic instincts of the Italian people, the faith in a progress for which all the resources of the country are necessary, the consciousness of a capacity to show the way to Europe and of great things to be done by Italy for the benefit of the world, all these concentrate themselves upon this one end. No difficulty which cannot be overcome is discerned, no hostile argument for which history or philosophy cannot find an answer."† So, while commending our unity, spoke Giuseppe Mazzini, who was fond also of

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* Romagnosi. *Instituzioni di civile filosophia ossia di giurisprudenza teorica.* P.I. L. vi, ch. ii. (ed., De Giorgi § 2.177.)

†Mazzini. Dell' Unità Italiana (Scritti editi ed inediti, vol. iii, p. 256).

repeating the words of Napoleon: "Italy is surrounded by the Alps and the sea. Her natural boundaries are so clearly marked that one might call her an island. Italy has only 150 leagues of frontier which adjoin the Continent of Europe and these 150 leagues are fortified by the highest barrier which can offer itself in opposition to men. . . . Of Italy, isolated behind her natural boundaries, destiny demands that she shall become a great and powerful nation. . . . Italy is a single nation; the unity of their customs, language and literature, must, sooner or later, reunite all her inhabitants under a single government. And Rome is, without doubt, the capital which the Italians will choose for their country."* This prophecy has already come true in so far as has been possible. We must resolve to realize it in its fullness and this by the retributive power of our arms, since every other means has been shown to be of no avail. To consent any longer to the mutilation and dismemberment of Italy, at the moment when a new order of things is ready to be established in Europe, would be an unforgivable sin. To pardon once again those who usurp our territory, now when it is in our power to drive them out, would be not forbearance but a shameful act of cowardice and complicity in a crime.

We are not concerned to estimate the value of the countries which we desire to set free. Though,

* Memoires de Napoléon. Vol. I. Description de l'Italie. (Ed. de Paris, 1867, Commentaires de Napoléon 1. pp. 105–129.)

instead of being rich in fruitful plains and noble woods, they were barren as the naked rock, even though they should present a picture of burning deserts instead of green pastures and deep and broad bodies of water, the source of vast industrial wealth, even again though they should lack their magnificent crown of sun-steeped slopes, and their ports and bays which offer limitless possibilities of commerce and advance in the consideration of the world, our will to liberate them would be no less resolute. For a moral purpose, that rises above all calculation or spirit of gain, unites the nation to the territory which is its own and makes each and all of us perceive that foreign domination is an offence, even if, for the purposes of argument, it be assumed that the injury it causes is not serious. So in our private life, we would not tolerate that an intruder should think fit to occupy even a small and negligible part of our property. And so all discussion concerning the greater or less interest which we have in the possession of this or that piece of land is beside the question, since it is decided *a priori* by an argument of the highest morality.

No one, moreover, can be unaware that, from the mere standpoint of utility, the districts with which we are concerned are of vital importance to us, for this reason among others that they practically dominate the neighbouring country beyond the Alps and thus form an essential condition of our national security. Would not this alone be enough to make our war a legitimate undertaking, according to that very school of thought which to-day is seen in Germany

to be exhausting itself in vain accusations against us? For instance, has not Professor Lasson, one of the true and foremost leaders of modern Germany, written that "a State which has been deprived of those dominating heights and river valleys upon which its defence naturally depends is naturally and with *perfect justice* inclined to repair the imperfect conditions of its existence by obtaining such things as it lacks and as are necessary for its security," and that, being unable generally to obtain these advantages by peaceful means, "its duty is to take them by force, making use promptly and energetically of all propitious circumstances."?*

But, truly, we have no need of these arguments, for we are not concerned here with the establishment of any new rights, but with the recovery of that which is our own, and *quod propium est alicujus amplius ejus fieri nequit.*

* * * *

The perfect justice of Italy's national cause and the impossibility of defending it by any other means than the resort to arms, endow our war with a sacred character. But the significance which it assumes in this general struggle of the nations gives to it a new and an even more tremendous sanctity. Italy entered the arena of war deliberately and with a clearer understanding than any other nation of how terrible must be her ordeal and how heavy her sacrifice. She joined in the war with the knowledge

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* Lasson, *Das Kulturideal und der Krieg.* (2 Aufl: Berlin 1906), p. 60.

that certain of the chief belligerents have, on their own confession, adopted a method of warfare which is restricted by no obligation, whether moral, legal or civil, which takes no regard of treaties, which spares neither neutrals nor non-combatants; a method, in a word, which violates every rule by which war differentiates itself from riot and pillage. These belligerents are those very States which, in times of peace, esteemed force above liberty and justice, as was exemplified particularly in their oppression of those smaller nations which by earlier acts of violence they had included within their own frontiers. It is against such belligerents that Italy has issued her challenge. This challenge therefore is part of a vaster design and obeys an impulse still more powerful than the restoration of the unity of the Italian people; it aims at the re-establishment of the authority of Justice itself, at the consecration of the ideals of humanity, and at instilling reverence into the society of the new era.

By a happy stroke of fortune, Italy is unable to defend herself without at the same time defending the whole of civilisation; she may not rouse herself to work as a nation without declaring at the same time the sanctity of every homeland. "The liberty of a people," wrote Giuseppe Mazzini, both as a man and as an Italian," may not conquer and endure save by faith in the right of all men to liberty. I love *my* homeland because I love *the* homeland; *our* liberty because I believe in *Liberty*; our rights because I have faith in *The Right*."

The truth of this admirable proposition, which makes clear to us what is our mission in the world, has lately again been demonstrated. When for shallow and short-sighted reasons of dynastic interest, certain of these " servants whom the Robbers of Territory have rewarded with every kind of honour," proposed to put an end to the independence of Serbia, Italy found within herself, in the traditions of her past and her aspirations for the future, a sure basis for her refusal to join in the dastardly undertaking. And when in shameful contempt of rights which a solemn compact had guaranteed, Belgium was invaded and torn to pieces by one of her own guarantors, it became evident to our whole nation that Italy's destiny could not require her to stand beside the aggressor.

It would be useless to consider how the German people, who have been brought, like our own, to political unity, in the name of and in obedience to the principle of national unity, and who, at first by the Reformation and then by their great philosophers like Kant and Fichte, have affirmed in the past the inviolable autonomy of Man—it would be useless to consider how these people have been led to transform themselves by degrees into a tremendous weapon of offence against universal liberty. One would say, truly, that at the very moment when the mechanism of their industries became perfected, this people lost first their understanding of the moral and rational limits of their power, and then the sublime conception which was formerly also a German one, of a Society living in obedience to the rights which exist between free and equal States.

This newest of the philosophies, which is derived from Hegel (in whose system, just below the surface of an idealistic formula, there lay concealed the seeds of the crudest materialism), has done its best to give unintelligible names of various kinds to the presumptuous thirst for power which has now become the leading characteristic of Germanism ; but it has not been able to ennoble that thirst, nor to make it tolerable to the family of civilised nations, who, confronted by this unbridled lust of dominion, found themselves, on the contrary, drawn and bound together by a moral compact. Nations differing widely in temperament and customs, endowed some with a capacity for commerce and others with a genius for the arts, some winning their bread upon the sea, others by labour in the field, some gifted with enthusiasm and energy, others accustomed to proceed slowly and with method, some refined and apparently exhausted by centuries of glorious history, others newly created, with their energies intact, in face of the hard and constantly renewed tests of the life of Modern Europe, this one organised as a Republic, that as an Empire, another small in numbers or confined within narrow boundaries, a fourth possessed of a population that may hardly be counted and of vast possessions that stretch over several continents—all became one before the supreme need of defending with their blood the conditions which are essential to their free development. These conditions are none other than the fundamental principles of the Rights of Mankind, thus enunciated, for instance, at the time

of the French Revolution : " Nations are independent and sovereign, whatever be the number of the individuals who compose them and the extent of the territories which they occupy." " One nation has no right to meddle in the government of others." "Whatever is undertaken against one nation is an attack on all the others." " Treaties between nations are sacred and inviolable."*

In these days the finest spirits of Germany, especially Kant, in his memorable monograph, " For Perpetual Peace," argued in no other way. And so when, to-day, she tramples these principles under foot, Germany offends not only against eternal Reason and Justice, but abandons the noblest part of her past. The miserable companions which she has been able to find for herself in this war are a proof how deplorable is this backsliding ; since it is surely not in accordance with the doctrines of history, it is indeed, from this standpoint, an unheard-of aberration, that a nation so young, so homogenous and so fruitful as the German nation, accustomed to every form of discipline, capable of all ideals and all progress, should be reduced to serve as the prop, in their dishonourable stage, of two hybrid empires, the Austro-Hungarian and the Turkish, who have never had any real capacity for development, and whose existence has never had a natural, but only a corrupt and artificial basis.

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* Art. 2, 7, 15, 21 of the *Declaration du Droit des Gens* which the Abbé Grégoire presented to the Convention on the 4th of Floréal in the year IV (25th April, 1795).

If then we find ourselves to-day in opposition to this nation with which we have so long shared and with which we would have gladly continued to share in intellectual labours, the fault is not ours. It is not we who have abandoned the straight path. While Germany was still seeking for her national unity Giuseppe Mazzini wrote as follows to a German: "Leave Austria to the doom which God and Man have decreed for her. Wipe away from the brow of Germany the stain which Austria left there, when she exhibited to Europe the sons of Hermann and Luther in the guise of the soldiers of despotism; and the nations will surround you with good-will and affection. . . . Fight for the principle that each land belongs to its own people. Suffer us to accomplish our Unity, and lay the foundations of your own. The souls of Germany and Italy shall join hands on the free summits of the Alps." This sublime admonition, which in 1866 appeared to be about to bear fruit, is to-day farther than ever before from seeing itself realised; that stain, which the great teacher wished to see wiped out, has spread itself over the brow of Germany, and the nations surround her, not with affection, but rather with a powerful armed barrier, in defence of their threatened liberties. And it is precisely in this that we see the indirect confirmation of the profound truth of that warning, which still retains its high ideal value and serves also to indicate the fatal error that Germany has made—that it is against this error that we are compelled to take up arms. "Do not lower," wrote Mazzini again in 1861 to three Germans who had replied to his exhortations

by paltry sophisms, "do not lower the vast question which to-day is agitating Europe to the level of an enquiry as to how many slaves will lose the living of such or such a master upon such a portion of the earth's surface. Do not adopt, you who are men of intelligence and progress, the weapons of Chancelleries that derive their existence from the Middle Ages. *Be Germans*, you say to your own people. In what sense do you use this word ? Of which Germans do you speak ? Of the Germany which works oppression in the name of violence or that one which does good in the name of Spiritual power ? Of the Germany of Luther—or of Metternich ? I also know, I who am a foreigner, a Germany which I salute with respect. It is that Germany which through the Reformation spoke the words: *Freedom of inquiry* ; through those obscure peasants of the same period: *the kingdom of Heaven should as much as possible be reproduced on earth* ; through the glorious procession of her philosophers and critics, from Lessing to Baur: *reflect seriously upon the great facts of humanity, Thought, History, Religion.* But this Germany has no need, in order to perform her mission in the world, of the district of the Adige, of Trent or of Rovereto. She has need of union, of harmony between thought and action, to the end that no one may be able to say: *She preaches to-day that which to-morrow she will betray by her deeds.* She has need of cleansing from the crimes of her dynasties, of rejecting the burden of injustice with which Austria has desired to load her. She has need of the love

and the esteem of the nations, not of suspicions and of war; need of concentrating her strength and of making the best use of it upon the soil where her tongue is spoken, where mothers repeat the legends of her people at the cradle of their children, not of dissipating it where it can only exist in a state of armed hostility towards encircling poor. It is to this Germany that I have spoken. Well, this Germany will not achieve her unity so long as the Empire of the Hapsburgs shall remain erect. She will not obtain the love of the nations, the full concentration of her energies, the consciousness of her mission, so long as she shall send her sons to fight by the side of those Croats (whom you seem, gentlemen, to love very little) against the national freedom of peoples who have done her no wrong, who can never become a danger to her, but who demand that they should be masters of their own countries. And you deceive yourselves if you suppose that in such a way you are aiding the German fatherland. One is never of service to the Fatherland, gentlemen, when one leads her along the road to dishonour."*

This prophetic utterance illustrates the root-principle of our present war so well that it would be impossible to-day to improve upon it. This war may be and is for us and for other peoples a war of liberation, but it is also for certain States a war of tragic expiation. It is, in short, of itself a step towards the coming of justice upon earth.

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* Mazzini. *To MM. Rodbertus, Deberg and L. Bucher* (in the *Unità italiana* of the 31 April, 1861, and in *Scritti editi ed inediti*, vol. xi, pp. 269-271.

Considered in its physical aspect, this war, like all other wars, is a contest of forces, a reciprocal attempt at destruction. But in its hidden aspect, it is almost the negative of what it thus appears to be; since it tends to establish a new order, under the rule of which no nation shall be enslaved, where ideal values shall be recognised with justice as being outside and above the disparity of physical forces. The logic of history has no fear of paradoxes. It is thus that in the present case we are fighting in a certain sense for the good even of our enemies, since our aim is to save those relics of humanity which are, in them, to-day obliterated and overturned. We work, as we have already said, not only in the defence of our own country but in defence of the principle of the inviolability of all countries. This principle we are re-affirming against the false conception, the dominating one to-day among the peoples against whom we are striving, according to which force has nothing to do with justice and everything is to be allowed to a State so long as it shall thereby add to its own power and territory.

Of this false conception the earliest victims were precisely those who had accepted it and tolerated it. Not only, indeed, was this conception bound at some time or other to arouse the indignation and desperate resistance of other nations, who were resolved not to give way to its violence, but also and above all, a criterion of this kind, so hostile to all equity, proposed as the basis of a State's relations with its neighbours, was fatally certain to produce an analogous contempt

for justice in the inner life of the same State. The two kinds of application are inseparable in reality as in logic. The spirit of aggression is by its very nature the enemy of freedom, and it is with the chains with which a people is willing to bind others that that people comes before everyone else to be loaded.

And so a war whose immediate cause is the necessity of holding back the arrogance of the foreigner, goes often in its results beyond this earliest intention and serves a vaster purpose: it awakes in the very State against which it is made, a moral and political crisis, out of which that nation is very likely, though its individuals perish, to emerge new-born, and here we find one of the most typical examples of that Law of Progressive Enlargement (or Heterogenesis of Finalities) which Vico indicated as a proof of the Immanent Cause ("Providenza") in the history of mankind.

Nobody to-day can foresee with certainty the changes which the present war will bring about in the internal affairs and the national sentiments of the peoples who are taking part in it, or tell, more particularly, through what changes and upheavals the German nation will recover that sense of justice which it has abandoned, or whether it will lead itself and its ruling classes back to that worship of Liberty which formerly characterised it. But this we can say without hesitation—that the principles for which we are fighting, the scale of values which it is our aim to pursue, are of no exclusive or particular quality, and are not ours alone, but belong to practically the

whole of the human race. It is precisely these principles and moral values—the autonomy of individuals and nations, the superiority of right to force, faith in the pledged word—these alone make life worth the living. If this tragic struggle results, as we cannot doubt it will, in a firmer establishment than in the past of these principles, it will be recognised by future generations, both of the victors and the vanquished, to have been the beginning of a new era, and the destruction that we witness to-day will be seen to have been the means, hideous but necessary, by which the whole of humanity shall have attained to a high degree of moral and civic knowledge.

This intrinsic usefulness of our war, which far transcends the immediate and particular objects of the belligerents, manifests itself in various ways. While, for instance, we are protecting against the barbarian fury of the modern iconoclasts those monuments which are the glory of history and of art, which are the most sacred inheritance of our nation, we are really preserving them not for ourselves alone, not only for our children, to whom it is our duty to hand them down as we ourselves have received them from our ancestors, but rather for all those in whom the divine sense of beauty exists or shall ever exist, and consequently for the future generations of our present enemies. And so it is not for our own benefit that we reject a mechanical system of civilisation, technically perfect, but empty of all morality and hostile to our national spirit, which is the child of spontaneity

and harmony (*euritmia*); it is not only from "sacro egoismo" that we revolt against the attempt to cripple or dwarf our national being. It is because we are aware that we Italians, such as we are and such as we desire to remain, are endowed with a high and special mission in "the organisation of the work of humanity" which is the final reason for the individualisation of countries. If through some inconceivable deterioration we had consented to occupy a subordinate rank in a monstrous political and military hierarchy which others than ourselves controlled, abandoning the free initiative and the free development of our national soul, we should not only have betrayed both ourselves and our future, but at the same time we should have betrayed the cause of human civilisation. For this cause still looks to the unblemished and uncorrupted genius of Italian nationality for the same inestimable assistance which the past has witnessed. To ensure that this genius be saved from injury, no effort can be too great, no sacrifice too heavy.

Firm in the conviction that our cause is intrinsically just and in perfect harmony with that of humanity in general, we confront without fear the supreme test of bloodshed, while we not only experience the horrors and miseries of war, but also learn to cultivate its beneficent virtues. War, like a purifying flame, kills within us all vulgar egoism and causes us to live more truly in the spirit of the nation, and thus in the universal spirit. It reveals to us our mysterious capacity for excelling ourselves, by delivering our souls from false and individual passions, which at

ordinary times hem it in and debase it. It shows us, as by a vision, that caprice must be sacrificed to liberty, that individual efforts are vanity if they are not subordinated to discipline and order, and that thus it is necessary that the crowd must acquire cohesion in order that the activities of all may result in the highest and the most difficult of achievements. War, which in times gone by tended to produce the pacification and union of the tribes (*gentes*) for the common end of defence, teaches us still, to-day, to repress individual desires, to put aside private quarrels, and to make an end of domestic struggles in order to consolidate the sovereignty of the State and to reaffirm the indissoluble bond of national unity. While formerly it served to stimulate the genius of mankind and to refine it, through the intense efforts which were necessary if even more serviceable methods of defence were to be created, it urges upon us to-day a similar activity, eminently progressive and fruitful in innumerable discoveries, even in the peaceful arts and industries; it gives rise to new inventions and new thoughts, causing to emerge from the intense efforts of the collective intelligence, as in some decisive experiment, astonishing capacities which have hitherto been stifled or whose existence has been unsuspected.

Never have these characteristic virtues of warfare shone more brightly than to-day, because no war has been so deeply felt and more intensely willed than that in which we are now engaged. No war has expressed a more lofty morality or has been more

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completely a war for Justice and Emancipation, not only national but human. In this struggle our conscience is clean, as our enthusiasm is ardent and our faith in victory absolute.

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